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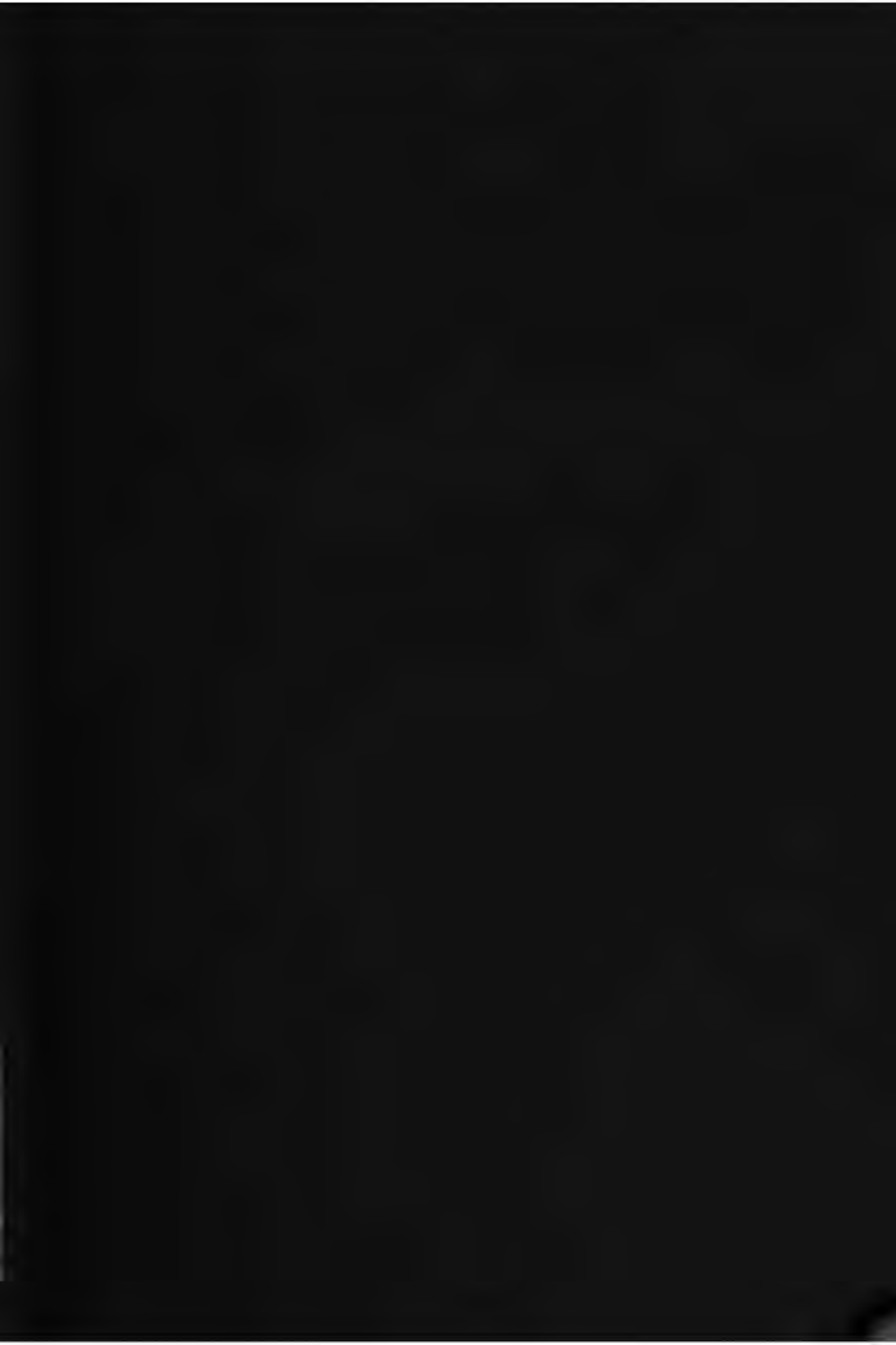
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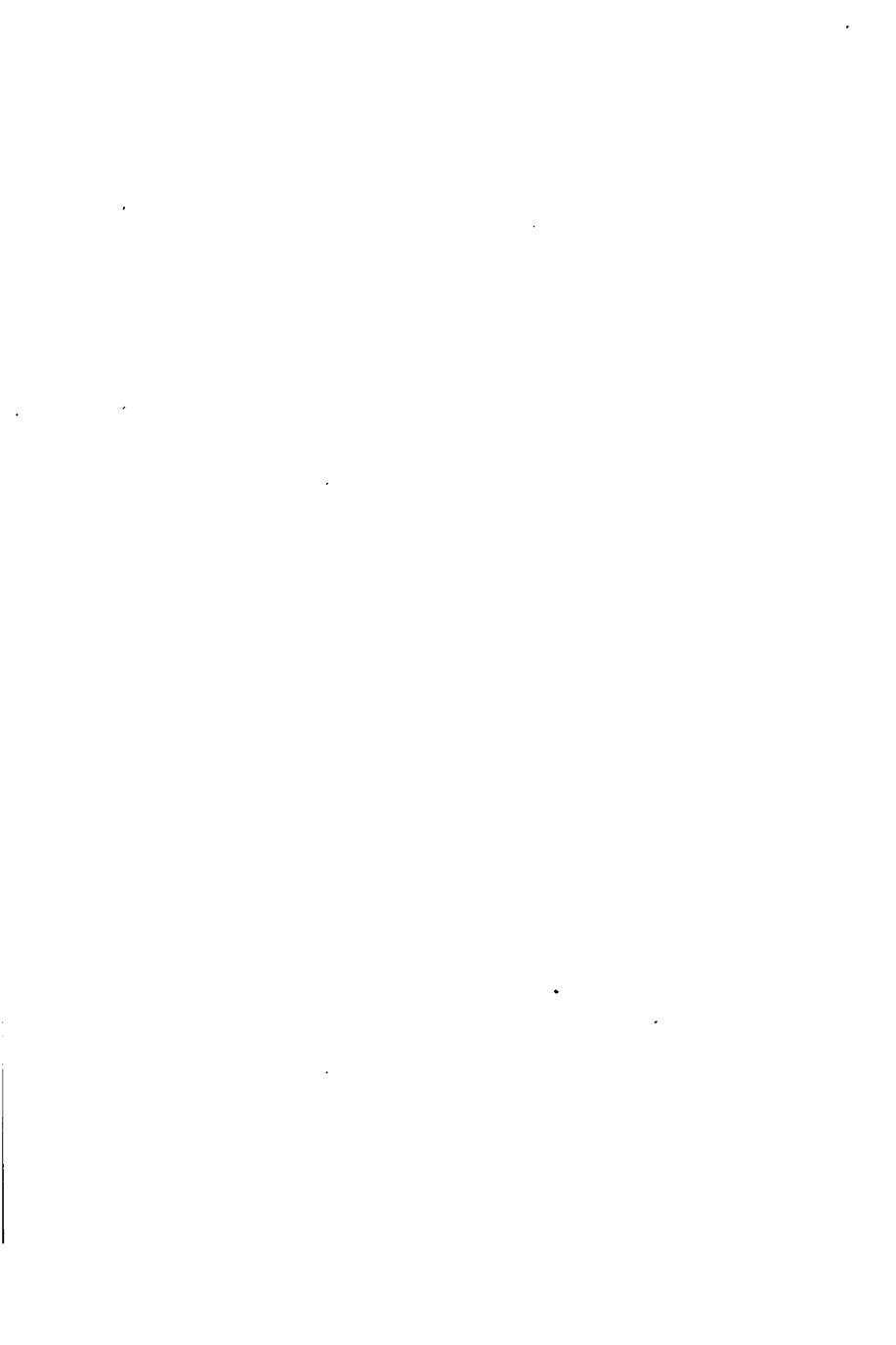
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THE LORD'S PRAYER.



THE LORD'S PRAYER.

NINE SERMONS

BY

W. S. CARTER, B.A.,

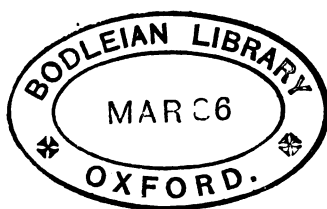
CURATE OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PADDINGTON, W.

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1885.

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TO THE
VERY REV. CHARLES JOHN VAUGHAN, D.D.,

DEAN OF LLANDAFF, AND MASTER OF THE TEMPLE,

I DEDICATE THESE SERMONS

(BY HIS KIND PERMISSION)

WITH SINCERE AFFECTION AND RESPECT.



P R E F A C E .

THESE Sermons,—based upon the notes of some Tuesday Evening Addresses delivered in 1881 at my former Curacy of St. Werburgh's, Derby,—were not intended for publication. They were preached on Sunday mornings and evenings during August and September 1885 at St. Paul's Church, Paddington, W. Many members of the congregation having expressed their desire that they should be printed, and the Vicar (the Rev. H. V. H. Cowell) having kindly given his sanction, I have felt it incumbent on me to issue this little Volume. The Sermons are all but unaltered, since their interest (such as it is) depends, I think, upon their being published as preached.

I would merely add that those who are familiar with the Work on the same subject by the Very Rev. C. J. Vaughan, D.D., will recognize

a similarity of arrangement, and something of the same treatment. Desiring to acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the valuable assistance derived by me, in all my parochial work, from his writings, I issue this Volume with an earnest prayer that the Master may use it if, and as, it shall seem good to Him.

WILLIAM S. CARTER.

ST. PAUL'S, PADDINGTON, W.

NOVEMBER, 1885.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER.

I.

“ Our Father, which art in Heaven.”

ST. MATT. VI. 9.

ON this and the next few Sundays, both morning and evening, I propose, brethren, that we should consider together the various clauses of that simple, marvellous, celestial, pattern Prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ bequeathed to His Church, and which is known, even to the very youngest among us, by the title of “ The Lord’s Prayer.” Sunday after Sunday we use it in our Services ; we have been familiar with its words from our earliest childhood ; most of us, doubtless, repeat it regularly night and morning in our private devotions ; and yet there are probably not many of us who really enter, as fully as we might do, into its meaning and grandeur. To a very large number, we fear, the

words are a mere form ; and when they recite them they do so almost mechanically,—they mean nothing, ask nothing, and therefore have nothing. It is in order, then, that for the future we may enter more fully into its depth of meaning ; and, when we use this prayer, may do so more heartily, and more intelligently, that I have selected this subject for our consideration.

Now, perhaps, the first thought which suggests itself is the great encouragement which is given to *all* prayer by the fact of the existence of a prayer taught to men by the Divine Master Himself. It is the fashion with some persons to disparage prayer altogether, and to urge either (1) that it is presumptuous on our part to suppose that the Divine Will (if there be, they say, a Divine Will) can be affected or changed by our petitions,—that God will consent to alter, at our desire, any part of His own great and orderly arrangement of the Universe,—or (2) that prayer evidences a want of trust, since if God be omniscient, and all-loving, there can be no necessity for us to narrate our wants.

Now, we might meet the first of these objections with a simple denial that prayer *is* a request to God to suspend the force of His natural laws. Let us shew this by a common illustration. If, when

walking along some dangerous path, we should suddenly stumble or slip, and be in danger of falling over a precipice, should we not naturally call upon a friend, if one should be near, to save us? And would any one say that, in doing this, we were asking him to suspend the law of gravity? Surely, surely not. All that we should be requiring would be that he should overcome its force by opposing to it if possible a stronger force,—that of his own manly strength. Just so is it when we address our petitions to God. Even when we ask for those things to which the greatest objection has been taken,—fine weather or rain, or the protection from sickness or accident,—we are not requesting a suspension of any existing law, but only that, so far as He sees right, He will cause a stronger force to intervene on our behalf in the midst of the natural forces which are then in existence.

But the Lord's Prayer renders answers such as this all but unnecessary. We may take much simpler ground; and, in answer to both objections, may well content ourselves with a reference to the revelation and the commands of Jesus Christ. We are creatures of to-day and yesterday, and know little or nothing of the mysteries of Nature; but Jesus, our Master, “the Effulgence of God's glory,

and the Impress of His Essence,"* Who *must* know whether prayer is either advantageous or necessary, not only bids us draw near to the Eternal Throne, but teaches us, in this prayer, which He gave to His disciples, that it is right to spread out before the Almighty Creator, even the humblest desires of our hearts.

It also meets another objection. Some, even of those who admit the utility of prayer, contend that prescribed forms are undevotional,—that prayer to be efficacious must be the spontaneous outcome of the needs of the passing moment,—that the petition which is tied and bound up in a set form of words is generally a cold, dull thing, unworthy of the name of prayer. But surely, the fault lies not in the form. So far as this is concerned, the Master answered the objection in anticipation, when He prefaced this prayer with the command for its use,—“When ye pray, *say*.” No ; let us be assured that God makes not distinction between the prayer which is extemporaneous, and that of which the form is set and prescribed, if only each is offered earnestly and trustfully, and the heart ascend with the words to Heaven.

And now, brethren, having spent thus much time on these preliminary considerations, which

* Heb. i. 3.

could not well have been altogether passed over, let us proceed to what we may call the Address, or the Invocation to this prayer:—“Our Father, Which art in Heaven.”

“Our Father”:—the words ought to have a delightful sound for every ear, since they should recall to our minds the “old, old story” of our redemption by Christ Jesus. Surely we poor creatures of a day, who are but “vile earth and miserable sinners,” could never have dared to call God “our Father” if the Saviour’s mission to earth had not revealed to us this relationship,—if He had not taught us the existence of this wonderful connection between man and the Eternal One,—a Fatherhood which is altogether prior to, and independent of, any act of ours; and a sonship which no lapse of time, and no unworthiness on our part can obliterate or do away. But the Master did not merely reveal to mankind the fact that God is not a stern tyrannical Creator, but a loving, tender Father, though this would have been much; but, in the very first word of the Prayer which He would have all men use, He gives us permission, nay He commands us, to approach the Throne of Grace with this Name upon our lips. Just as though He knew exactly how difficult prayer is to our fallen nature, especially when we feel our own

unworthiness, and would bring to our remembrance the thought which comforted the Prodigal in the Parable,—the Sentence with which we commenced this evening's Service: “I will arise, and go to my Father.” No; Christ, in His love, does not bid us wait for that conscious “assurance” of reconciliation, or that conscious feeling of conversion, which some think to be the first step Godwards. He, on the contrary, encourages us to draw nigh, the very first moment that we begin to realise our sinfulness, to One to Whose love we, even then, have some right of access; to One Who, just because He is “our Father,” will never reject our first strivings after a better, a higher, a holier life. Oh! brethren, it ought to be a thought full of comfort for each one in this congregation to-night, that we may approach God with the assured confidence that our prayers are offered to an Eternal Father Who is ever willing to stretch out His Loving, His Almighty Hand, to shield those who by creation, by adoption, and by redemption, are His own children.

But we must not be selfish when we use the Master's prayer: the very pronoun teaches us this. It is not “*My* Father,” but “*Our* Father.” The individual is merged in the collective body. We are reminded that we are not isolated units, but mem-

bers of one great family ; and that, therefore, when we approach God we must remember our relationship to others. It would be well if this were made a rule in *all* our devotions. Our prayers might, with great advantage, be far more intercessory in their character. Few of us pray, as much as we might do, for our home relations, for our chosen friends, and for those who minister to us in holy things. It would be a very great encouragement to the Clergy if they knew that any large proportion of their congregations prayed regularly for them. I know, at all events, that it would very greatly strengthen the hands of both the Vicar and myself in our work here, if we could feel that we were remembered in prayer before God by the worshippers in this church ; if, for instance, they would ask every Saturday evening for a blessing upon our ministrations on the coming day.

It appears, perhaps, at first sight, strange that the words, “Which art in heaven” should have found a place in this connection, since they may seem to place a sort of barrier between us and “our Father,” by reminding us that His Throne and Dwelling-place are far removed from this our earth. But certainly this is not the reason for their insertion : the context itself shows that the Master never meant this. He simply would withdraw our

thoughts from this world, and direct them to our Father's Home, teaching us that, in proportion as our affections are “set on things above,” so we shall be drawn nearer to His Holy Presence. The same idea occurs in our Holy Communion Service, where we are taught to lift up our hearts to the Lord before we can take upon our lips the Angelic hymn. And more than this; the words ought also to remind us that, if we are striving to live worthily of our calling, as sons of God,—if in the fullest and deepest sense we have learnt to know God as “our Father,” the Heaven of which we make mention will be our future inheritance,—that when our earthly life shall have ended, and our bodies rested for a brief space in the grave, we shall enter into our Father's Home, “the House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Brethren, let us all resolve henceforward to value more deeply, and to prize more greatly, this our relationship to God. For indeed the thought of it ought to be a great help, and a great comfort to us. Why, if we did but regard every throb of pain, every bitter bereavement, every deep disappointment, as coming direct from the hands of a Father “Who worketh all in love,” we should feel that they were not half so hard to bear; for we should

know that they *must* work together for our ultimate good, even although we might not see how. Oh! we can never exhaust all the meaning which is contained in that one word “Father.” We know how much it implies—even in its common use—of care and guidance, of support and direction;—that nothing can ever fully make up to a child for the loss of a good father in early life; then what must the word contain when it is applied to Him from Whom all these earthly relationships borrow their name?

And the Fatherhood of God is wide as the world. No child of man is excluded. We must never narrow, with our theological dogmas, the Lord’s Prayer. There is absolutely none whom it does not embrace; no, not *one*. We may make distinctions, and restrictions on the meaning, but God recognises them not.

“The love of God is broader
Than the measure of man’s mind,”

and, if the heart but go with the words, the richest noble who worships in the grandest cathedral is not more regarded as God’s son than is the poorest beggar who offers up his petition in the humblest Mission Room or cottage. Each alike, each equally, has the right to approach the Almighty with this name of love upon His lips, and with the

same assurance that God will own him for His child. And, if ever our path through life should seem mysterious and dark, let us never forget that we are God's children, and may (as such) trustfully ask Him to take our hand and guide us. *And He will.*

SUNDAY EVENING,
August 2nd, 1885.

II.

“Hallowed be Thy Name.”

ST. MATT. VI. 9.

LAST Sunday evening, so far as was possible in the compass of a brief sermon, we endeavoured to consider together the Invocation with which the Lord's Prayer commences. We noticed the great encouragement which the Master gives to both private and liturgical prayer by His command to use these inspired petitions, and then considered the help and comfort which we ought to derive from the revelation to us of the Fatherhood of God. This morning, and on each of the next four Sunday mornings and evenings, we are to fix our minds on the petitions, in which we tell “our Father” the desires of our hearts. They are not lengthy,—nay, they are short and terse; but, in importance and depth of meaning, they are indeed great. They are seven in number, and may most conveniently be classified in two divisions:—(1) containing the first three, which are concerned with God and His Glory,—which are, if we may say so reverently,

prayers for God's honour; and (2) containing the remaining four, which are concerned with ourselves and our own welfare. We omit the Doxology from this classification, although we hope to devote an evening to it at the close.

The Invocation has already shewn us that selfishness finds no encouragement in the Master's Prayer, since the individuality of each worshipper is lost in the thought of the collective body. And this is emphasized not only by the nature of the petitions which Christ has taught God's children to offer to their Father, but also by their order and arrangement. He Who, in the course of the Sermon on the Mount, impressed upon His hearers the necessity of seeking God's Kingdom and Righteousness, promising that, if they would make these their primary concern, all things needful for their bodily sustenance should be added to them, also teaches us to pray that God's Name may be hallowed, that His Kingdom may come, that His Will may be done, before we utter a single syllable of petition on behalf of ourselves.

And, even when we *do*, the selfish word "My" is excluded; it is always "Our,"—*our* bread, *our* trespasses, *our* peril. How different this is to our ordinary custom! We are, most of us, prone to think our own concerns so important, that it is very difficult for us

to put them in the second place. If we just think, for a moment, of our usual morning and evening devotions, and leave out of consideration the Lord's Prayer, we shall be astonished to see how little of the remainder is concerned with anything but self. Perhaps there may be (there is not always) confession of our own sins, petitions for our own wants, thanksgiving for our own blessings:—but how much is there besides? And yet the Master does but take what *ought* to be the truly natural order. For when we understand our relationship to God, —when we realise that the question is not whether we *are* His children, but merely whether we are willing to acknowledge and to fulfil the duties which spring out of a Parentage which we cannot forfeit or do away with,—certainly, when once we have made up our minds to render Him filial obedience,—remembering what He is and what we are, it follows as a matter of course that the first object of our requests should be the Glory of God, the Advent of His Kingdom, and the execution of His Will.

We pray then, first, "Hallowed be Thy Name," —a petition which recalls the third of those ten Commandments delivered on the Holy Mount to Moses, and which enforces the duty of reverence for the Name of God.

Now, the first question which naturally arises is as to the meaning which we are to give to the word "Name" both in the Commandment and in the Prayer. Dictionaries tell us that a "name" is a discriminative appellation of an individual,—a means by which we distinguish one person from another,—a brief summary of his attributes by which we may "supersede the necessity of interminable descriptions, and set before us, by a sort of telegraphic despatch, the whole person—face, form, and properties—of him whom we know and of whom we would make mention."* God's "Name," then, is that by which we know Him,—the sum of the Attributes by which He is revealed to mankind. Virtually, therefore, it stands for God Himself, and for all that is in any way connected with Him.† For instance, we are told that in answer to the earnest entreaty of Moses that he might be permitted to see the glory of God, "the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed the name of Jehovah." And we read that that "Name" was the sum of the Attributes of the Almighty:—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

* Dr. C. J. Vaughan.

† "In scriptura Dei nomen pro Deo ponitur. Nomine enim cognoscitur, invocatur, et celebratur."—*Menochius*.

keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”* God, then, in every attribute of power, and love, and patience, and justice, and mercy, and truth,—God, as He is in any way revealed to mankind,—that is what we mean when we speak of His “Name.”

But how, then, can we “hallow” this Name? No doubt the original signification of the word translated “hallow” was to “*make holy*,” and denoted the consecration of common or profane things to religious uses. But this meaning is clearly entirely out of place here:—we cannot, in this sense, hallow, consecrate, the Name of God. There is, however, a secondary sense in which the word is often used, and in which we must read it here; namely, as meaning to venerate, to treat a holy thing as holy, to stand in awe of it, to deal with it as consecrated. So, when we ask that God's Name may be hallowed, the real meaning of our petition is that the holiness, and the glory, and the righteousness of God may be so brought home to the hearts and consciences of all His creatures that they may render to Him the honour which is

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

assuredly His due,—that, as it has been beautifully expressed, “all God’s creatures everywhere may reverence Him as He ought to be revered,—that all unworthy conceptions, and all irreverent thoughts of Him may be done away with throughout His universe, and that He may be known and worshipped, and revered, by all that He has made, according to His Nature, and according to His self-revelation.” *

Understood thus, the petition has two very practical thoughts contained in it.

(1) If we pray, “Hallowed be Thy Name” we, of course, must be on our guard against that dishonour which would be done to Him if, in actual speech, holy words were profanely taken upon the lips. Do none of us ever sin in this respect? We are not asking whether there is freedom from that gross profanity which indulges in common oaths,—that surely we may take for granted in a congregation like this,—but are we always watchful to avoid any *approach* to profaneness in speech? It is so easy, in some society, to provoke a passing laugh by some irreverent jest, some ludicrous misquotation, or some smart humorous allusion to a passage in God’s Holy Word, that the temptation to do so is sometimes found irresistible. Are we

* Dr. C. J. Vaughan

always careful to check such a tendency in ourselves; and, by our silence, if not by actual speech, to shew our disapproval of such conduct in others?

- Or are we, on the contrary, so cowardly that we join in the merriment, and thus do dishonour to our God? If so, surely we ought to ask His forgiveness before we next pray “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

(2) But the Petition reaches deeper and wider far than this. It is our duty to hallow God’s Name with our lips and in our lives.

With our *lips*:—especially in the public worship of the Church. How seldom are our Services regarded in this light! Even amongst our regular ordinary worshippers, how few consider that when they stand up to sing, or kneel down to pray, in God’s House, they are hallowing His Name with their tongues and with their voices! How many really religious people come to church to get help for themselves, and quite forget that there is another, and an even more important side to our public worship; that prayer and praise, and communion, have each a two-fold aspect,—look *God-ward* as well as *man-ward*,—and while they bring down blessings to men, are also a means of hallowing the Name, the Attributes of God.

In our *lives*:—yes, after all, this is the greatest

and best of the means by which we may show our reverence and honour for God's Name. If we set Him always before us, and endeavour to rise above the temptations of this sinful world to heavenly things, then our whole lives shall be a manifestation of His Glory,—a consecration of His Name. And although, perhaps, it is only in Heaven where the Angels eternally worship Him, that that Name can be fully and worthily hallowed,—yet, as day by day we come to understand more of His love, and care, and greatness, we shall be gradually fitting ourselves for that Home where, with Cherubim and Seraphim, we shall join in the perpetual praise of Him Whose “Name” is “excellent in all the world,” and Who “has set His Glory above the heavens.”

SUNDAY MORNING,
August 9th, 1885.

III.

“Thy Kingdom come.”

ST. MATT. VI. 10.

WE have already spoken of the revelation of that relationship of mankind to Almighty God which enables all men to address Him by the endearing title of Father: and from this we passed,—as we have seen, most naturally,—to the first petition of this most wonderful and comprehensive prayer, which desires that His Name may always, everywhere, and by all men, be hallowed,—treated as holy. Now if we desire that this request may be fulfilled, it is only natural that we should add the petition which forms our text this morning,—“Thy Kingdom come;” for until the “kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,” the hallowing of God’s Name will never be perfectly accomplished.

Although this petition is the shortest in the whole prayer, the three words of which it is composed are full of weight and instruction. We have heard

much, in these last few weeks, as to the admission of some two millions of our fellow-countrymen to the full privileges of English citizenship : and no doubt it is very right that they who are subject to the laws of the country should have some voice in the selection of the representatives by whom the laws are made. But there is another Kingdom to which every child of God belongs. In addition to his obedience to the government under which he lives, he owes allegiance to another Sovereign, and can claim the privileges of another citizenship. Yes, the text would remind us that we are not only *children* of God, but that He has a Kingdom in which each one of us is a *subject*,—a Kingdom in which all men have those equal privileges and equal rights, the possession of which here on earth is vainly sought,—a Kingdom whose citizenship is free to all.

"Thy Kingdom come:" what do we *mean* when we pray this? What, first of all, are we to understand by the "Kingdom"? The word is not always employed in the same sense in Holy Scripture. Sometimes it refers to that universal sovereignty, or dominion, which God, as Creator and Upholder of all things, exercises throughout the whole created system; as in the twenty-second Psalm, where it is said that "the kingdom is the Lord's,

and He is the governor among the nations,"* and this is the sense in which we have declared this morning, in the prayer for the Queen's Majesty, that He is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." At other times it has reference to the Authority which God exercises in the hearts and consciences of those who acknowledge His sovereignty,—the "Kingdom" which comes not with pomp and outward show,—the "Kingdom" which the Divine Master declared to be within the individual,—the "Kingdom" which has its seat in the wills and the affections of His children.† It has also two other meanings at least: (1) the "Church Militant here in earth" which is a preparation for, if it be not the very beginning of, the Kingdom of glory; and (2) that Kingdom of glory itself,—the universal reign of righteousness, which we speak of in common parlance as "Heaven," and in which no death, no sin, no pain, shall mar the blessedness of those who are counted worthy to enter.

You know with what remarkable frequency the expression "the Kingdom of God" occurs in the Master's teaching. Not that it was an altogether new idea or thought; for, if we look to the Old Testament, we shall also find it used by the sacred writers there. Take, for instance, the time of the

* Psa. xxii. 28.

† St. Luke xvii. 21.

Babylonish Captivity. Just then, when everything seemed to be quite at the darkest, when God's people seemed absolutely and entirely crushed, when their holy places were in solitude and ruin, and every vestige of the glorious kingdom which had existed under David was well nigh lost,—it was predicted by the prophet Daniel that a new dispensation should dawn upon the earth,—that there should come “One with the clouds of heaven” to Whom should be given “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,”—to Whom all nations should be subject, Whose rule should be eternal, and Whose throne should be indestructible.* But when Christ came to earth the fact was brought more specially into prominence. His forerunner announced that “the Kingdom of Heaven” was about to come, and although no doubt those who heard his message misunderstood the nature of that Kingdom, when the Master came He revealed it plainly. In parable after parable He unfolded its various aspects, teaching clearly and distinctly that before men could reign with God, God must reign in them. And so impressed did men become with His claim to sovereignty that, on one occasion they would have attempted forcibly to confer on Him an earthly rule;† and, when He stood before His judge, one of

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

† St. John vi. 15.

the charges brought against Him was that He had called Himself a King.* But few indeed were they whose perception reached as far as did that of the thief upon the Cross who, in his penitence desired of the Saviour a remembrance when He should “come in His Kingdom.” *He* could see that which the majority of the Jews ignored,—that the Kingdom of God was of a different nature to the kingdoms of the world. Oh! brethren,—when we think of this, and also remember that the Master, in His reply to Pilate’s question, said that His Kingdom was “not of this world,”†—surely there is a lesson for us when we view the Church of God as being His “Kingdom.” Men contend much in these days,—and, from all appearances, the contention during the next few years will be sharper than ever before,—for the discontinuance of the present relations between the Church and the State of England. No doubt it is, in many respects, very much for the benefit of both that they should be linked together, and that the rights and privileges of the one should be protected by the other. We may feel that, by such a national recognition of religion, the Church’s influence for God may be vastly enlarged,—that the efficiency of her machinery is increased by what is called her

* St. Luke xxiii. 2.

† St. John xviii. 36.

“establishment,”—but, amid all this contention, let us never for one moment suppose that such an union is, in any way, an *essential* thing. Many devout and godly churchmen feel that it *may* be too dearly purchased; and certainly the history of the early Church proves that there was not less real progress made,—that there was not less vigour, or less spiritual life and zeal in her sons, when they had to encounter the most decided and powerful opposition, when all the forces of the world were arrayed against the rising religion, and when endowments such as we have now were unknown. No doubt many of us have heard the well-known story which is told of the early Franciscan monk, St. Thomas of Aquinum. He was one day sitting in the Vatican with Pope Innocent the Fourth, and large masses of gold and silver were being carried into the treasury. “The day has passed, you see,” said the Pope in a self-satisfied manner, “when the Church could say ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” “Yes,” replied St. Thomas, “and with it has also passed the day when she could say to the paralytic ‘Rise up and walk.’” No, it is not endowment but fidelity which God regards:—the establishment of a connection between the Church of any country and the State must never, in any sense, be regarded as an establishment of the “Kingdom of God.”

We have spoken of the various senses in which the word "Kingdom" is used: let us now examine a little closely what we mean when we pray that this "Kingdom" may "*come*." Perhaps there are three significations which this clause may have on our lips. (1) We may desire that Christ's Gospel may be universally received, and that the rule of God may be acknowledged throughout the world,—that the usurpation of the Devil may come to an end,—that God's salvation may be known unto all mankind, and His religion accepted even in those heathen countries where, as yet, His very Name is unknown. (2) We must also pray, as a necessary preliminary to this, for a personal application of this prayer,—for the enthronement of God in our own hearts, and the implantation of holiness in our souls. And (3) let us not forget that it has another, and a most solemn, meaning too. For it is also a prayer (have we ever thought of this?) for the hastening of that day when, all things having been put under Him, God shall be "All in all,"—when He Who once came in lowliness and "great humility" shall come "in glorious majesty to judge the quick and the dead." In each of these three aspects the Prayer has a very practical thought for all of us.

(1) When we pray that the boundaries of God's

Kingdom may be co-extensive with the uttermost bounds of the earth, we ought to take care that, as far as lies in our power, we further the accomplishment of our prayer. If this petition were a reality to all who utter it, Mission work would shew far greater results than it does now. Thousands upon thousands abroad, and (to our shame be it said) thousands upon thousands even in the homes (if we can call some of them such) of many parts of this our own England, are living and dying knowing nothing of the love of God,—nothing of His Kingdom. Brethren, every earnest Christian should endeavour to do missionary work for God! True, he may not feel called to go forth into what we term the “Mission Field,” whether abroad or at home,—this needs not only deep devotion, but also special knowledge and special preparation. But each one can, to some extent, by his actions, if not by his words, spread the knowledge of God. He can let men see that he is always animated by a lofty purpose,—that he has a strength and a power which the world knows not of. He can also give a proportion of his substance to aid missionary work; and, accompanying his contributions with an earnest prayer for God’s blessing, he shall have some share in the advancement of “the Kingdom.”

(2) When we pray that the Kingdom of God may be established in our own hearts, we ought to endeavour so to “mortify our corrupt affections” that God’s law may obtain a willing obedience there. This will be a work of time,—for the Kingdom, in this sense, “cometh not with observation,”—it is of gradual growth. But even if we have to maintain a long weary warfare with sin,—so long as there is, in our inmost hearts, a true loyalty to God, so long as we sincerely *strive* to give Him our allegiance,—we shall ultimately find that not less surely, though slowly and with pain, has been established in our hearts the Master’s “Kingdom.”

(3) When we pray for the coming of God’s Heavenly Kingdom, we ought to examine ourselves carefully to see whether we can utter this petition with an honest and good heart. True, Christ *meant* us to include this in our prayer, but are we able to do it? If we have ever lost some dear one from earth, and have listened to the prayer offered up by the opened grave, “That it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy Kingdom,”—have we never felt, if not the impossibility, at least the difficulty, of joining in it,—a fear lest in the very prayer for the hastening we should be asking our own exclusion? And is it

not just the same with this petition? Can we sincerely pray "Thy Kingdom come" in the sense of the final Advent? Yes, thank God, we *can*. For if we are anxious to love and please Him, if we are earnestly endeavouring to advance His cause, if (in other words) we truly use the petition in the two other senses, then we can also ask even *this*, with the assurance that even to us, unworthy though we be, the Master will grant a place in His Kingdom, "when He shall come in His glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him."

And if there should be some here this morning who feel that their lives are still so sin-stained that they dare not pray for God's Kingdom thus to come to *them*, at least they can use the petition as a prayer that they may come to His Kingdom. They wish, they hope, at last to attain to a place in the "many mansions:" although they know that they are unprepared as yet. If, then, they can pray the prayer in no other sense, they can at least ask, by it, as much as the "remembrance" which the thief upon the cross desired in "the Kingdom." Soon, if they persevere in prayer, this will not be all. Day by day the petition shall advance in application for them; and they who, at first, dared only use it in this restricted sense, will find that, in proportion as their characters become

more elevated and ennobled, it will expand and enlarge in meaning, until, as they draw near to the end of their journey, they anticipate eagerly and hopefully the day which will admit them to their "perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul," in God's eternal and glorious Kingdom.

SUNDAY MORNING,

August 16th, 1885.

IV.

**“Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is
in Heaven.”**

ST. MATT. VI. 10.

THE Petition which is before us this evening is the last of those three clauses in the Lord's Prayer, in which God Himself is the immediate object, and which we have ventured to call prayers for His glory, and for His honour. Some have regarded it as a mere expansion of the petition which we considered together this morning, contending that the desire for the advent of God's Kingdom naturally implies a request that His subjects may obey His laws. Others, again, have viewed it rather as an act of resignation than as a separate prayer,—a reluctant surrender, such as a creature who felt his own powerlessness to counteract the will of the Creator might make, although in no truly submissive spirit. But neither of these views seems accurate : for the petition before us is an expression of a definite desire ; and, inasmuch as it expresses

what should be one of the great aims and ends of each of our lives, it is an altogether different thing to a declaration of our acquiescence in a will which, if we had the power, we would oppose.

It is not every “Will” of God which comes within the province of our prayers. It has been pointed out, in a sermon on this subject, by the present Dean of Llandaff, that “there are Wills of God which need no praying for. That Will of God which set Nature (as we speak) in motion,—that Will of God which keeps Providence (as we speak) in action, the one securing the orderly course of material systems; the other over-ruling the anxious, perilous, terrible march of cause and consequence, of reaping and sowing, in matters which have lives and souls for their factors, and for their results,—*these* two Wills of God none can help, and none can hinder: we can but make room for them, bow and submit ourselves, and let them work.” With regard to these, it would be idle to ask for their accomplishment, for it is secured without our prayers. But there is at least *one* “Will of God” in respect to which this prayer has much depth of meaning; and that is His Desire for the universal salvation of mankind, and His Purpose concerning our own individual lives and actions.

We are expressly taught by St. Paul, in his

Epistle to Timothy,* that it is the will of God that “all men should be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth.” His Will in this respect is a revelation of the gospel: it was made known to mankind only by the life and death of Jesus. That first taught men how greatly, how earnestly, man’s salvation was God’s desire. He saw that the human race could only be saved thus, and therefore He “spared not His own Son,” but delivered Him up to die! Oh, it is a very wonderful thing,—the scheme of man’s redemption; but, when we think of it, perhaps it is still more marvellous that it should be possible for man to resist God’s will in this respect. And yet it is so; for so long as sin, with its concomitants, misery and suffering, continue to exist, God’s Will is not wholly done. Well may we pray, then, as we look around us and see so much sorrow, and pain, and sin, in the world, that He will be pleased to hasten the time when all men throughout His universe shall obey and execute His blessed Will.

For perhaps the most important aspect of the prayer is that which concerns the individual lives and actions of men. God’s Will can only be done universally by multiplied acts of individual obedience. To Him our every action is known: none is too

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

small, none too insignificant, to be regarded by Him. As, then, we pray this prayer, "Thy will be done in earth," let us mentally add to it these words,—*"by me personally,—in me personally."*

By us. And that willingly. We have, to a great extent, our future in our own hands. For although in obedience to the Will of God consists alike our duty and our happiness, and although no doubt His power could coerce us into such obedience, yet it has pleased Him to endow us with a freedom of choice, which enables us to do, or refuse to do, the things which God loves. To each of us certain talents have been entrusted, which it is His will should be used for His Glory: to each of us He has assigned some work which it is His will that we should do; and we are responsible for the use or the neglect, for the performance or the omission. Day by day He watches us from His heavenly Home, and marks whether we avoid or run into this or that temptation,—whether we, in what we do, seek our own will or His Will. And if sometimes we do not see our way clear before us,—if there should seem to be two roads leading in opposite directions, and we know not which it is right to take,—if we will only ask Him to guide us He will make the way plain. If we will but let the light of God's Lantern, which is His Holy Word, shine

upon the difficult question of duty, or the doubtful question of expediency, our path shall become obvious, for He will direct our steps aright:—"If any man desire to do His Will," he shall not be left in ignorance as to its nature.*

In us:—that His Will for our own personal sanctification may be completely fulfilled. Oh, let us pray this not merely resignedly, but without a reluctant thought. Let us, in humble submission, absolutely yield up our own wills to His Will, assured that the loving Father, Who knows the needs of each of His children, and what discipline is required for their perfecting, is working "all in love." Let us cultivate more and more of the spirit which breathes in that beautiful hymn which we have just been singing,† and even in the heaviest misfortune, or the deepest trouble, patiently await the issue, confident that God's way, however dark and mysterious it may seem, will surely prove the *best* way in His own good time.

"As it is in Heaven." Although these words are usually applied only to this one Petition, I feel confident that they should be regarded as

* St. John vii. 17.

† "Thy way, not mine, O Lord;
However dark it be."

Hymns A. and M., 265.

attached to *each* of the three Petitions which precede them. As they stand in the original Greek they certainly and clearly admit of this interpretation, since there the words "it is," which seem to restrict them to the execution of God's Will, find no place. As, then, I would interpret them, the sense of the three clauses may be thus briefly paraphrased:—Let Thy Name receive that reverence from men on earth which it receives from the heavenly denizens; let Thy Kingdom be as fully established in this lower world as it already is in the heavenly courts; and let Thy Will be executed, and accepted by us below as it is by the blessed Angels above.

We know not, indeed, nor can we ever know here, the full meaning of that "As." It has not pleased God to reveal to us the manner in which His Will is performed by the Angel-spirits. Little is told us in the Bible of their history or work; but two points at least are clear, and they are enough for our purpose now.

(1) The Angels are described as being "Holy;" and therefore God's Will is done by them with absolute perfection, and without the intervention of any spot or taint of Evil. Perfectly, indeed, *we* can never here on earth do the Will of God; but if, in our degree, we desire to imitate the Angelic

service, we must (as far as we can) abstain from sin, and maintain “a conscience void of offence.”

(2) The Angels are spoken of as “ministering spirits,” who execute God’s Will with alacrity and joy,—not as performing a hard, wearisome task, but with self-forgetting sympathy. They “minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;” they are commissioned to guard the lambs of Christ’s flock; they rejoice over the repentance of the sinner. If, then, we would imitate their obedience to God’s Will, we must set ourselves to minister to other “children of God,”—to help them to bear their burdens, and to extend to them a loving sympathy. And let us remember, in doing this, that it is not ours to judge our fellows,—not ours to condemn others, or to refuse to recognize them as brethren. It is God’s Will that “*not one*” of His children should perish; and, if we would strive to do God’s Will in God’s way, we must regard even the most degraded as a son of God. The Bishop of Bedford has told us* that there are two methods by which we may seek to help our fellow-men. We may either “stand, as it were, on a lofty eminence,” and thence treat them as sinners whom we pity, and tell them to “come up to our level, where all is so bright, and pure, and happy”:—*that* is one way.

* *Pastoral Work*, p. 113.

Or we may go to *them*,—down amidst the very haunts of the sin and misery which surrounds them; and, when we have made them feel that we are their friends, we may take them by the hand,—not minding how they have fallen, or how deeply they are sunk in the mire,—and may say, “My poor brother or sister, let us try to get up higher together. I am but a fellow-toiler, but I am come to you to see if you will let me stretch out a helping hand.” We can tell them that we know that they cannot be quite happy in their sinful life, because we, too, have known what sin and temptation are; and we can appeal to them on the ground that we are both alike “children of God,”—that He is their Father and ours. Is not this, dear brethren, the most likely way to succeed? Oh, you who are District Visitors, you who in any way are striving to do any work for God, if you are acting thus, you are copying the Angels in their exercise of ministry, and your efforts in behalf of the accomplishment of the Will of God undoubtedly will have some effect, however small, in bringing about that result. And, although it may be that your work seems often frustrated, although you may oft-times feel discouraged, yet Almighty God will behold and bless your attempts, will support you in all difficulties, will

give you "strength as your day," and will reward you, and your work, in the day of His appearing, and His Kingdom.

One word in conclusion. To root out self-will, and to submit wholly to God, is perhaps the very hardest lesson we have ever to learn; but, when it is learnt, it is a very blessed one. We all have our troubles, and what we call "our crosses;" and it is full of comfort to be able just to kneel down, and place the matter trustfully in God's Hands, saying "Thy Will be done," in the assurance that He Who governs the world *must* do right. In this, as in other things, the Master "left us an example," for, in the moment of His bitter pain and suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, He took upon His own lips the prayer which he had taught His Church, "If this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy Will be done." In this world we may have to bear pain and suffering; in this world the "shadow of the Cross" may be upon our lives; but hereafter "the sorrow shall be turned into joy,"—the Cross shall be exchanged for the Crown.

"Then, when on earth we breathe no more,
The Prayer, oft mixed with tears before,
We'll sing upon a happier shore,—
Thy Will be done."

SUNDAY EVENING,
August 16th, 1885.

V.

“Give us this day our daily Bread.”

ST. MATT. VI. 11.

WE have already observed that the primary lesson which Christ would teach us, both by the order and character of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer, is the duty of unselfishness. We are to lose sight of our own wants until we have thought of God's Majesty and Sovereignty, and shewn our care for the extension of His Kingdom, and the accomplishment of His Will. And not only this; but by thus instructing us to place things spiritual before things temporal, He would also shew us the comparative value of our own concerns and of the things which have to do with the cause of God,—teaching us that His Name, His Kingdom, and His Will are the truly important matters, and therefore must take precedence; and that our desires, even for absolute necessities, in this transitory life, ought to be subordinated, in our prayers, to the advancement of the Will, and the Work, and the Glory of God.

But if the Lord's Prayer had come to a conclusion without making any mention at all of the things which pertain to human life, we must all feel that it would have been an unnatural prayer; for we cannot, as we are situated, altogether despise the things of earth. And the Master, knowing this, does not require us to do it. He Who understands what want and temptation are, fully sympathises with the natural desires of, and the sore impediments to, the life of the soul; knows how persistent are the attacks of the Evil One; and therefore exhibits no indifference either to temporal wants or spiritual distress. No; the Lord's prayer is a *natural*, is a *real* prayer. In three petitions we have endeavoured to fix our thoughts on God,—the last four petitions relate to the needs of man.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” When we remember the Fatherhood of God, it is most natural that the first prayer which we offer for ourselves should be for needful and competent provision. Human analogy would suggest this; for it is the primary instinct of our childhood to look to the parent to whom we owe the commencement of our existence, for that nourishment and support which are necessary to the continuance of the life which has been called into being. We come, then, to

God as children to a Father,—come to Him just because we *are* His children,—to ask for those things without which we cannot live.

Two of the words in the Greek of this petition require a special notice; and the order of the words is also expressive. “The Bread, our daily, give to us to-day,” or (as St. Luke says) “day by day,” as if the willingness of God to continue the gift should be emphasized.

“Our Bread.” All Commentators, from very early times,* seem to be agreed that the word translated “bread” † is very comprehensive; and that by this petition we pray for everything which is needful for the support and for the refreshment both of the body and the soul. We repeat “what is *needful*,” for it is obvious from the word itself that dainties and luxuries are excluded,—that, however innocent these things may be for us, we are not praying for what we should like, but for what we really require. Yet, even so, how wonderfully comprehensive is this petition! For, in its reference to our temporal requirements, it doubtless includes not only the mere food, however nutritive in itself, but also that power to earn it without which so many could not

* “*Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, hoc est, da nobis hodie fortitudinem corporis et animæ, et salutem utriusque.*”
—*St. Edmund, in Speculum Ecclesiæ.*

† ἄpros.

procure it, that state of bodily health which will further its conversion into nourishment, that raiment which is suitable for the body, and that shelter from the elements without which life must be intolerable. And, in its reference to things spiritual, it includes not only the daily portion of the teaching of the Word of God, and not only the spiritual Food of “the most precious Body and Blood of Christ,” “which are” (as our Church Catechism teaches) “verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful” in the Holy Communion, but also that power of spiritual digestion and assimilation without which even that refreshing Food will fail to prove nutritious to us. This, probably, is the meaning of the word “our” in the petition; namely, that *kind* of food, temporal and spiritual, which our Father, in His wisdom, shall see to be suitable for our support.

But the word which follows* is one exceedingly difficult of interpretation. It has been a source of perplexity to every Commentator, and it would not be easy to find any expression in Holy Scripture which has been more variously explained. St. Chrysostom says that “it seems to have been coined by the two Evangelists” who “have thus expressed in Greek some phrase used by our Lord

* ἐπιούσιος.

in giving this prayer orally." It is a word which is never found in the writings of any classical author, and, in the whole of the New Testament is found only in this Prayer. Its derivation seems to be as difficult as its interpretation, and it has been called by one of the old writers, "the rack of theologians." This is not the place for critical details, but we ought, perhaps, just to notice some of the various interpretations which it has received.

The Vulgate renders the word by the translation "super-substantial," thereby restricting it to spiritual Food, and leaving the whole Prayer open to the objection, which we have already noticed, of being unnatural,—of having no care, and no thought, for the bodily needs of man. But more than this; in the old Italic version the word was not thus translated. This interpretation seems to have originated with St. Jerome, and does such violence to the Greek, that it seems only possible to account for the support which it has received by reason of the countenance which it may be thought to give to that Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation, which our Church condemns as "repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrowing the nature of a Sacrament, and giving occasion to many superstitions." *

* Article xxviii.

Another rendering of the word has been "sufficient for our present support and subsistence,"* in opposition to another Greek word † which is found in the Septuagint denoting what is abundant or superfluous. If we accept this interpretation of the word, we shall understand it as teaching us to pray only for that nourishment which is absolutely necessary for the passing hour.

A third interpretation, which is favoured by some of the most eminent scholars of the present day, derives the word from a familiar Greek phrase translated "to-morrow,"—"the day which is coming on." ‡ The great objection urged against this view is, of course, the fact that apparently it would be in direct opposition to the thirty-fourth verse of the very Chapter in which our Text occurs, where the Master enforces the lesson of our dependence upon God, and commands us not to increase the cares and sorrows of to-day by adding to them the unknown possible cares of the morrow. But this is not quite decisive against it for two reasons:—(1) We must not forget that the Hebrew day lasted from sunset to sunset. If, then, this prayer was used at the evening devotions of the Hebrew

* *Anderson on the Lord's Prayer*, p.52.

† περιούσιος.

‡ ἡ ἐπιούσα understanding ἡμέρα; or ὁ ἐπὶ ὧν understanding χρόνος.

Christians, the Bread for the coming day (a day which in one sense had already begun) might well be asked overnight. And (2) it is not really inconsistent with our Lord's command that we should avoid anxious care; since, if we make the morrow's bread the subject of earnest prayer, we ought to be content to leave the matter in God's Hands: and surely where this is done anxiety can have no place.

Three very helpful thoughts are suggested by this petition, brethren, and with them we will close.

(1) The Master would teach us by the very comprehensiveness of this clause that God measures not prayer by the length of the petition. Our Heavenly Father “knoweth what things we have need of before we ask Him;” and if we approach Him trustfully and in faith, He does not require us to lay before Him a long catalogue of our wants. For many, if not for most of us, it would tend to our advancement in the spiritual life if we were to approach God more frequently, rather than to draw near seldom, and stay perhaps longer in His Presence. Oh, if we could but impress upon our congregations the power for good,—the help to resist sin,—which there is in what is called “ejaculatory prayer,”—in the thought which is

frequently lifted up to God, and which is more a remembrance of His Omnipresence than an actual petition!

"Prayer is the breathing of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye,
When none but God is near."

(2) The fact that our daily nourishment comes from our Father's Hands should enforce the duty of daily thanksgiving. It has been said that "the saint and the sinner are alike the recipients of God's bounty;" and no doubt it is true that God does bestow His gifts of rain and sunshine, of food and clothing, for the most part, on both the evil and the good. No doubt it is true that even those who do not regard these things as a Father's gifts yet receive them and profit by them. But just as there is an enormous difference,—not, perhaps, in the actual value, but nevertheless in our estimate of it,—between the book or the picture which is given to us as a token of affection by some dear and valued friend, and the book or the picture which we have ourselves purchased; so also is there a wide distinction between the Food which the careless eat without thought of the Source whence it comes, and that Food which God's children eat with thankfulness as sent to them by a loving Father. And let our thankfulness be expressed in words.

Let us never omit our Grace before, and after meals; and let us look upon it not as a mere, unmeaning form, but as a heartfelt acknowledgment that we receive all our nourishment from the Hand of God, and sincerely desire that our reception of our food may be crowned with His Blessing.

(3) Lastly, brethren, this petition teaches us that it is lawful to seek temporal Blessings from God. No doubt it is right that, in the Prayer which Christ would have *all* men use, the petition should be limited to that which is absolutely essential to life, as otherwise the poor man and the rich man could not find in the Prayer a common meeting-ground. But in our own private prayers it is surely permissible somewhat to extend the request, and to seek also a moderate portion of temporal prosperity, provided that we couple the petition with a guarded “peradventure,” and offer it in complete resignation to God’s Will. With this reservation we may pray for such a position as will render our lives more comfortable, and even for a larger share of this world’s goods, if God should see that the possession of such wealth would not cause us to sacrifice interests vastly superior. Christianity pure and simple,—Christianity as taught by the Master,—is a Religion for every-day life, and therefore takes notice of our

every-day employments. The farmer may legitimately ask God's blessing on his labours, the professional man may ask for prosperity in his calling, the tradesman may desire God to render all his honest enterprises successful. Yes, we may each of us take to God our every wish, our every desire ; may spread them before Him, and ask Him to grant them if He shall see them to be for our real good ; but we must always be careful to remember that, whatever our earthly lot in life may be, it is only the love of God which can make us truly happy and prosperous,—it is only His Blessing which indeed makes us rich, and "addeth no sorrow with it."

SUNDAY MORNING,

August 23rd, 1885.

VI.

**“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive
our debtors.”**

ST. MATT. VI. 12.

THE proofs of the Master's deep knowledge of, and sympathy with, our human nature, now meet us at every stage of the Prayer which He taught. In this morning's Sermon we noticed His tender, loving thought for the natural wants of man, in the Petition, which He inspired, for our temporal necessities; and now, in the three remaining Petitions, we shall see that for man's spiritual needs, also, He has made full provision. For the past there is Forgiveness; for the present there is Deliverance; for the future there is Preventing Grace. It is the first of these three which is before us this evening.

“Forgive us our debts.” St. Luke says, “our sins;” our own Church prayer says, “our trespasses.” The variations in the word are not of vital importance, for the main idea, in each place, is an act or thought which causes estrangement or alienation from God. As has been well

said, “Although St. Matthew, in the petition itself, sets down ‘debts;’ yet in the repetition presently after, he sets down ‘trespasses:’ and St. Luke, also, though in the fore part of the petition he sets down ‘sins;’ yet in the latter part he sets down ‘debtors.’”* The forgiveness,—*that* is the great reality: the “debt,” the “trespass,” the “sin” is only a different aspect of the wrong-doing. Yet let us spend a moment or two in glancing at each of these words, for we may gain much of instruction from them.

The word “trespasses,”† which we commonly use in our devotions, expresses those sins which we have lamented this evening in the General Confession, in which we admitted having “erred and strayed” from God’s ways “like lost sheep.” For, taken literally, the word has the signification of “a falling beside,”—the crossing over a set line, or boundary,—the stepping aside from the right way.

The more general word‡ used by St. Luke contains the idea of a failure of action,—a falling short of what we were designed to be,—the missing of our aim and mark. It therefore suggests the saddening thought of what we *might* have been;

* *Sir Richard Baker.* Compare the Greek of St. Matt. vi. 12 with that of St. Luke xi. 4.

† παραπτώματα.

‡ ἁμαρτίαι.

how much we might have done for God,—how little we really have done. Perhaps, for many of us, one of our most bitter sorrows consists in the memory of wasted opportunities in days now past. When, for instance, we look back upon the School-life, and the early surroundings which helped to form our characters; or on the College life, with the occupations and friendships which we prized so much less dearly than we might have done; or on the Business life, or the Professional life, with all their marvellous influences and opportunities; we must confess that indeed our "sins" in these relations have been numberless,—that for opportunities *not* used for God, and for influence *mis-used*, we have much need to ask forgiveness.

The word in the Text* suggests a third aspect, in some respects not unlike the second. It would teach us to view our trespasses, our sins, as so many accumulations towards a great debt. It would remind us that we are under a vast obligation to God,—that we owe to Him the fulness of a life's devotion,—that we are bound to give Him an absolutely perfect love, a complete obedience. Each act of sin, each trespass, is therefore an omission to render to Him a portion of this debt. Does this seem to any one in this

* ὀφειλήματα.

congregation a light view to take of Sin? It assuredly would not do so if, at any time in their past lives, they had known, by bitter experience, the intense misery that it was to owe some large amount to a fellow-creature,—a debt which they knew that they could not discharge. If they had felt how its weight seemed to drag them down almost to the ground, how much less fitted for work were their energies, how sleepless the nights were rendered by reason of their imaginary contrivances of impossible measures of payment, they would then be able to enter somewhat into the meaning intended to be conveyed by St. Matthew when he uses the word “debts” with respect to our sins. And surely it is also allowable for us to include in this word the idea of the *punishment* which is due to us for those sins. God has pronounced sentence of death upon “the soul that sinneth;”*—it cannot, then, be unreasonable to suppose that a petition for the remission of Sin should include also a desire for absolution, as far as may be possible, from the consequences of Sin.†

“*Our trespasses,*” “*our sins,*” “*our debts.*” The very Pronoun reminds us that man is not

* Ezek. xviii. 4, 20.

† “In old English, i.e. in Anglo-Saxon and Norman, the word for guilt or trespass, and debt or fine, is all one: ‘Gylt,’ guilt or debt: ‘Forfait,’ trespass or fine.”—*Anderson on the Lord’s Prayer*, p. 69.

compelled to sin,—that every sin which we commit is done of our own free choice, and that for each we are accountable. Now when we consider the irresistible reign of law in the Natural World, and observe how Consequence there follows Cause with relentless, and almost merciless severity, we must surely feel that it is a marvellous thing that these trespasses, these sins, these debts, can in *any* way find remission. As has been said, "Was ever miracle greater than this miracle,—the appeal to God to undo His own work? To roll back the Red Sea or the Jordan upon itself were easier surely, far easier, than this—this undoing of the thing done—this cancelling of the unpayable debt."* It is so different from anything which meets us in the constitution and course of Nature that we cannot reason from analogy; and, but for the fact that Jesus Christ,—Who, being God as well as man, knew all things, and could not speak otherwise than truly,—has Himself revealed this wondrous doctrine, the idea of a free Forgiveness of Sins would be absolutely incredible. A Divine revelation was required, and a Divine revelation was bestowed.

And just consider how necessary it is that we should thus have been assured of the truth of this

* Dr. C. J. Vaughan.

doctrine. Without forgiveness, without reconciliation with God, all the other petitions for our own wants, even if they were heard and granted, would avail little. To what purpose should we be nourished, or guarded against evil in the future, if God's displeasure with us for sins past were not “done away”? Have any of you ever stood upon some mountain side in the early morning, and, looking upward, found it was impossible to see anything of the summit by reason of a thick mist which overshadowed it? You knew that the Sun was shining; you could feel its warmth; a brightness was even visible through the mist; but the Sun could not itself be seen. And then, perhaps, even as you were looking, the mist suddenly lifted; and immediately the atmosphere became clear, the Sun shone out brightly, and peak after peak caught the new-born splendour. Just so while the thick mist of Guilt overshadows the Soul, God's Face is hidden from His children; and it is not until the sin is forgiven, and the guilt done away, that their Father's Face can truly shine forth upon them, even although they may feel something of the warmth of His Love. Oh yes, the Forgiveness of Sins is a true and blessed doctrine; and the fact that the Master places this petition in the Prayer which He taught mankind,—the fact that it is one

of the daily petitions which the Church teaches her members to use,—ought to guard us against falling into either of two great mistakes which even earnest sincere Christians have sometimes made.

(1) Some have asserted that, since in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the gift of Regeneration is imparted, there is no forgiveness if afterwards the baptized should relapse into Sin, and they have attempted to uphold this doctrine by misinterpreting three verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews.* (2) Others, on the contrary, feeling that this cannot be true, have fallen into error in the opposite direction, by contending that they who have received the gift of Regeneration,—which (as a rule) these do not make synonymous with the gift imparted in Holy Baptism,—they who have “experienced the great change of heart,”—who have been “truly converted” as they call it,—are incapable of ever again falling into Sin: once having been “safe,” they are “safe for ever.” I am not in the least exaggerating. Not very far from this church I have heard this doctrine preached in unwarrantable and excitable language; but I venture to say to you, dear brethren, that it is quite as untrue as the other. This *latter* is

* Heb. vi. 4-6.

untrue to our own experience; for, unless we are very self-deceived, our own hearts must tell us that we,—who are God’s children once, twice, thrice over,—do constantly fall short even of our own standard of perfection; how much more, then, of that standard by which an All-Holy God measures right and wrong. And *both* are untrue to God’s revelation, as is proved abundantly even by this very petition, in which Jesus Christ has taught all God’s children,—yes, even those who can say “our Father” in its fullest and deepest meaning,—to pray day by day “Forgive us our trespasses.” It may be that we may not need again a great wide, sweeping, Forgiveness:—the great change from the state of Sin to the state of Salvation may be long past: yet day by day we shall need, and day by day we may obtain, a cleansing from the world’s defilement,—a fresh Forgiveness for sins committed in the hours which are past.

But there are two conditions attached to God’s Forgiveness of Sin,—the one implied in this prayer, and the other expressed. The first is Confession. We say that it is implied here, since the fact that we ask for Forgiveness is itself an admission of wrong-doing. But elsewhere it is distinctly stated. St. John says, in the Verse with which our Service

this evening commenced, that "if we confess our sins," God "is faithful and just to forgive" them.* But this Confession is to *God*; not to man, except in so far as we may confess our fault to those whom we have injured, as a part of the reparation. Any idea of what is called "Sacramental Confession,"—of a cataloguing and a detailing of sins to an intermediary, who is also a fellow-sinner,—seems to me to be entirely contrary to the teaching both of the Church of England and the Word of God. The whole teaching of Holy Scripture as to the Forgiveness of Sin seems to be based upon the ground of a personal transaction taking place between the sinner and the Saviour. And, although our Church has a ministry of comfort for her members, and in one case has made a special provision for the quieting of the conscience by an unburdening of trouble,—although one of the carefully guarded forms of Absolution which the Clergy are privileged to use may seem to be open to abuse,—we venture to say that neither in the Bible or the Prayer Book is there any real warrant for that most dangerous doctrine by which, in the Church of Rome, the priest virtually interposes between the Sin-Pardoner and the sinner. No; the Confession spoken of is a Confession direct

* 1 St. John i. 9.

to God; and, so far from a detailed catalogue of sins being required, in very many cases it would be far better that the sins should be merely mentioned in general. Not only the dwelling on, but even the mere thinking of certain sins, is often, too often, the prelude to further wrongdoing. God knows the heart, and all that He requires is that there should be a sincere sorrow for Sin past, and that the Confession should be accompanied by an earnest resolution to lead a new life.

The second condition is expressed in the closing words of our Text. It is a condition which applies to the poor man as much as to the rich man, which each alike can fulfil, and which, therefore, is equally obligatory on both. It is that *we* “forgive *our* debtors,”—“those who have trespassed against *us*.” Yes, forgiven ourselves, we must not refuse the same Pardon to any who have wronged us. For if we cherish an unforgiving spirit ourselves; if we allow a desire for revenge, or a spirit of illwill, to rankle in our hearts against any who may have injured or offended us, we are virtually imploring a retention of our own sins every time we utter the Lord’s Prayer. Nor is it only here that the Master taught His disciples this great lesson. Over and

over again it was inculcated by Him; repeatedly and at various times did He enforce it. We all remember the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, which sets before us this great lesson of Forgiveness. The King, in that Parable, forgave the servant an amount which (according to some Commentators) is represented by a sum exceeding two million pounds of our money, but retracted His remission of the debt on the Servant's neglect to shew a like spirit of Forgiveness to a fellow-servant who was indebted to *him* in a sum so paltry, that it is almost impossible to compare it with his own indebtedness to the King. Oh, brethren, let our Text warn us not to indulge an unforgiving spirit. Is there any one in this congregation who has an offended friend to whom he has not yet endeavoured to become reconciled? If so, never mind whose fault the quarrel was; forgive,—ask forgiveness,—*anyhow*, make it up. This, if we do, we may approach God with this Prayer upon our lips, assured that if only our repentance is sincere, our “debts” shall be cancelled and our “sins” forgiven, for His sake Who has promised that if we “forgive men their trespasses,” our Heavenly Father “will also forgive” us.

SUNDAY EVENING,

August 23rd, 1885.

VII.

“And lead us not into Temptation.”

ST. MATT. VI. 13.

THIS morning we have before us the only words in the whole of the Master's Prayer which are negative in their form or character. By many Commentators they are joined to the Petition which follows them, and dealt with as though the “Temptation” into which we pray not to be “led,” and the “Evil” from which we ask to be delivered, were much the same in meaning. We propose, however, to separate the consideration of them, and that for two reasons. First, because we believe the present words to refer strictly to something which is not necessarily evil,—to what has been called “debateable ground;” and next, because the rendering which the Revisers of the New Testament have given to the second clause, in the new Version, makes it a prayer against a definite personal Enemy, which demands much more careful con-

sideration than we should be able to give to it if we were to attempt to treat of both clauses within the limits of one brief Sermon. This morning, therefore, we propose to consider only that portion of the Prayer which relates to “Temptation,” leaving the question of the Personality of the Tempter until next Sunday.

“Lead us not into Temptation.” We have said that this has been called “debateable ground,” since it opens up the question whether Temptation is itself Sin. This has been much discussed, and at great length; but most writers appear to agree in the conclusion that although Temptation is the entrance gate through which the sin may pass, it is not, in itself, an offence against God. “It is one thing,” says a well-known writer on this subject,* “to be tempted, and another thing to fall. A temptation is not a sin. ‘*Sentire tentationem*,’ to be strongly tempted, is common to every one of us; ‘*consentire tentationi*,’ to be guilty of wickedness, need be the misery of none. The Devil may suggest, but until suggestion has become acceptance, we are still innocent.” Sin consists not in the assault, but in the surrender. There are two passages in Holy Scripture which make this point very clear. We are told, in the Epistle to the

* Canon Farrar: “In the days of thy youth,” p. 298.

Hebrews,* that Jesus Christ Himself “suffered, being tempted,” and the accounts given us in the Gospels prove that He felt all the power of Temptation in its completest and severest form. Yet the same Inspired Writer says † that, notwithstanding this Temptation, the Master was “without Sin.” No; just as it is impossible to prevent birds winging their flight over our heads,—so also is it impossible to prevent Temptation assailing us daily and hourly, but we can take care that the suggestion to evil shall not entice us into Sin; we can turn away from it, we can resist it, in God’s strength we can repel and overcome it.

In all this we have accepted the common meaning placed upon the word “Temptation,” but we must remember that it is not the *only* one. In this sense we could scarcely ask God not to “lead us into” it. For it would be an insult, alike to His Justice and His Love, to suppose, for a single moment, that He is capable of “tempting” us in the sense of placing stumbling-blocks in our way to Heaven, or sending us enticements to Sin. No; we believe that it is with an altogether different meaning that the word is used in the Text, although the same idea lies at the root of both. “Temptation” is, literally, “the making trial of a person;”

* Heb. ii. 18.

† Heb. iv. 15.

and, whether this is done as a mark of love, in order to strengthen, or make evident, the faith of the person so “tempted,” or whether it is done with the malicious intention of enticing in order to overthrow that faith, in either case there is, at the bottom, the desire to “explore” the man. Brethren, St. James has taught us* that it is only in the former of these meanings that we can apply the word to God. But in *this* sense we can; for Holy Scripture tells us in another place,† that “God did tempt Abraham,”—that is to say, He brought upon Him such a trial of his faith as would prove that He was God’s true servant, would strengthen him, and make his faith manifest. An old Greek version ‡ expresses the true nature of this trial, by saying that “God *glorified* § Abraham;” that is, as it has been explained, || “gave him a special opportunity of showing his entire trust in God, and thus of attaining the glorious title of ‘the Father of the faithful’ to all times.” So that, although we must never suppose that our hearts are allured into Sin by Almighty God, yet if we believe that His superintending Providence “ordereth all things both in Heaven and earth,” we must be sensible that there are distinct occasions

* St. James i. 13. † Gen. xxii. 1. ‡ Symmachus.

§ εδοξασεν.

|| Karlake.

and circumstances in our lives, when we seem to be brought into a position of great “trial,” even by the very Hand of God. Against the recurrence of such times, and such occasions, brethren, we may well use this Prayer. For, knowing how weak are our own resolutions for good, how poor is our faith even at its best, how much need we have of support from God, we have great reason to desire that, if it can be in accordance with His Will, He would refrain from bringing upon us these “trials,” and from placing us in these situations, even although the motive of the “Temptation” thus sent is wholly Love.

But, although this is probably the more *exact* rendering of the Petition which forms our Text, there is also one aspect of its secondary and popular sense, in which it may be rightly used. We said, last Sunday evening, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ revealed to man a free Forgiveness for past Sin. But when the Sin has been forgiven, all is not over. The contest with evil is a lifelong struggle; and therefore we may use this Petition as a prayer that whenever, in the future, it shall be our lot to encounter the force of fresh temptation, we may not be left to ourselves, but may be defended with the might of the power of God. As St. Paul teaches us in the Chapter which has been

read as the second Lesson,* no temptation is really insuperable, if we will call God to our aid, “He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able;” and, if we make a bold fight and a stout resistance, we shall be able, in His strength, to conquer and overcome. If it is true, on the one hand, that Temptation is so dangerous that the prayer for preservation from it must find an echo in every heart, yet it is also true that no temptation assails us from which God has not provided “a way of escape.”† No one when he is tempted need fall. The terrible doctrine, which has found some adherents, that God has predestinated some individuals to Sin, and (some say) even to Eternal Death, is so entirely abhorrent to all right feeling, so contrary to everything which is revealed to us of the Nature and Attributes of “our Father,” that it is scarcely possible to understand how such a conception could ever have taken root in the mind. No, my brother, my sister, however tempted you and I may be, however hard pressed we may feel ourselves, we *need not* give way. However severe, however searching the trial, we can never be compelled to yield. We may always, if we will ask, have God’s Grace imparted, and we shall ever find that that Grace will be sufficient for

* 1 Cor. x.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

all our needs. And if we remember that, in the past, we have not only been exposed to sore temptations, but have also experienced grievous falls, let us take heart and courage to-day. And let us thank God that the entrance into His holy Heaven is not promised only to those who have here on earth kept themselves sinless (for, if it were, could *any* of us dare to hope?), but to those who have “endured Temptation,”* and who, when they have soiled their robes with sin, “have washed them, and made them white ‘again’ in the blood of the Lamb.”† In that blood we may find full pardon for the past; and in God’s Strength we may find abundant grace for the future.

The Master, on the night of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, taught us another lesson in connection with this subject of Temptation, on which we must say one or two words. He said that if we would avoid the entrance into Temptation we must not only pray, but “watch.” It is right that we should pray with all earnestness, but we must also do *our* part in the lifelong conflict with Sin. The duty of Christian Watchfulness has often been enforced from this Pulpit; and, therefore, with three thoughts on the subject we will close.

- (1) Let us avoid, as far as possible, *meeting* with

* St. James i. 12.

† Rev. vii. 14.

Temptation. Let us be careful, very careful, to shun those places, those persons, those things, which our past experience teaches us are for us fraught with danger. This thought will have different meanings for different persons. As Bishop Butler has said, “Temptations from within and from without mutually imply each other,”* and what may be no temptation to one person may be an exceeding snare to another. But each heart will know the thing meant, and can apply the word to itself. Especially should we be careful in the matter of our Friendships, for these influence the life and the character more than we know. Do you not feel how much easier it is to do right, and to resist Sin, when you are with one friend than it is when with another? Friendship is all but the most blessed Gift of God; but you know that there are certain persons whom you sometimes call “friends” who lead you into Temptation,—with whom you cannot spend an hour without hearing words spoken, without seeing actions done, which are not in accordance with what your own heart tells you is right. Such “friendships” are not really worthy of the name, and they must be at once given up if you would avoid imperilling your souls. We

* *Butler's Analogy.* Part I, ch. 4.

cannot sincerely pray this Petition if we thus voluntarily *seek* Temptation.

(2) Let us be on our guard to check at once any *thought* which would lead us to sin. We must not ponder over it, we must not parley with it; or, in most instances, we shall yield. We must resist the *beginnings* of Evil. The looking at wanton pictures has not seldom led on to impurity of action; carelessness as to keeping accounts has sometimes resulted in absolute dishonesty; the sight of strong drink has been known to recall to drunkenness a man who for seventeen years had kept his pledge. Seeing, then, that our Human Nature is so frail, and remembering the Apostle's caution to him that “thinketh he standeth,” we ought so to keep the fortress of our hearts, so to “set a watch upon the door of our lips,” that even the slightest temptation to sin shall find prompt expulsion.

(3) And let us be very careful that our influence upon *others* shall be in the right direction; let us see to it that, in no way, do we tempt *them* to sin. We have been reading lately, in the lessons for the day, part of the history of a king whose life forms one of the “black pages” in the Bible, and of whom this stands out as a prominent characteristic,

“He made Israel to sin.” Do you say, “I am so small, so insignificant, that I really have *no* Influence?” I reply, that *cannot* be so. The acts and words which you and I do and utter in the course of our contact with the world must have some influence with our fellow-men. We never know how far that influence will extend,—how much harm an inconsiderate word or action may do to others; how careful, then, we ought always to be! But, if this be the case with *unconscious* Influence, with how much more force does it apply to that Influence which most of us know that we possess with those who form the circle of our immediate friends. How guarded we ought to be that, in our intercourse with them, there should never be anything which would make it possible for them truly to plead our example as the beginning of their wrong-doing,—much less to say that it was our enticements which led them into Sin.

“Lead us not into Temptation.” With careful watchfulness in these three matters, let us pray this Prayer,—using it in its two-fold aspect, as a Prayer against God’s loving but awful scrutinies, and also for protection against the enticements and machinations of the Devil,—not relaxing our vigilance, nor ceasing in our petition until that day when our trial-time shall be ended. And when Sin

and Temptation shall both be for ever past may we, brethren, be found to have “endured” to the end, and receive “the Crown of Life” which God has promised to those who shall emerge from the struggle victorious.

SUNDAY MORNING,

August 30th, 1885.

VIII.

“But deliver us from Evil.”

ST. MATT. VI. 13.

THIS morning, brethren, we are to deal with the last Petition of the Master's Prayer; and to-night we shall conclude our Course with a consideration of the Ascription, or Doxology.

In some respects the clause before us is most difficult of interpretation. For the word “Evil” has so wide an import, so extensive a signification, that it would be impossible to deal, even superficially, with the vast number of things which may be understood to be embraced in the Supplication. We propose, however, to deal with it on the lines which have been laid down for us in that Catechism which we were, most of us at least, taught in our earliest infancy; and these instruct us to interpret the Petition as a prayer that God “will keep us from all Sin and Wickedness, and from our Ghostly Enemy, and from Everlasting Death.”

“Evil” in a three-fold light is thus presented to our view:—(1) Evil in an impersonal sense,—unholy actions, impure thoughts, sinful words;

(2) a positive Personality,—an evil Spirit, exercising his baneful influence over our spiritual lives ; and (3) the “evil” to ourselves, that which shall hereafter be the consequence of our having yielded to Satan’s solicitations, and which is described as the penalty, the “wages” of sin. It is from all these various kinds of Evil that we beseech God to deliver us, when we use this prayer. Let us consider each of them in order.

“*From all Sin and Wickedness.*” Perhaps the first thought which strikes us in this connection is the enormous difference there is between the estimate of “Evil” made by a religious man, and that made by a person who is devoted to this world and its enjoyments. The former regards as really evil only those things which tend to hinder his progress upward and heavenward,—those things which make against his advancement in the life of God ; whereas the latter considers only those things worthy of the designation, which prevent his spending this present life in as comfortable a manner as he otherwise might do. Bodily disease, pain, poverty, disappointments, bereavements, anything which causes discomfort to the body, are all that concerns the one man ; the other, with a truer and deeper knowledge, whilst admitting these to be “afflictions” does not consider them necessarily

“evils,” since he knows that God will send nothing really evil to those whom He loves, and that these chastenings come from Him. He therefore prays against those things which prevent his soul from the enjoyment of full communion with its God. He knows, too, that in praying for deliverance from these, he virtually includes the others, since Sin has been rightly called “the root of all other evils, whether penal or afflictive”; * and if the cause is removed, the effect will naturally cease.

But it may be urged that, if this be so, God does not answer this Prayer. Christians use it daily, and yet they often fall into Sin; notwithstanding their Petition they still suffer. Yes; but it does not necessarily follow that the Prayer is unanswered.

It is true,—only too true,—that, in spite of our prayers for holiness, we are still far removed from freedom from Sin,—that our struggles to be pure are often defeated. We are not only naturally prone to Sin, but are also so tied and bound with the chain of sins past, that it is unlikely that we shall always be victorious.

But have not some of us experienced that kind of deliverance from evil which has turned even our sin into a means of good, and made the very “Evil” itself a source of blessing? It is somewhat in this

* *Wilson.*

sense that St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” * God has many ways of responding to the prayers of His children; and whether He answers them by removing the Evil, by enabling them to overcome it, or by causing it to tend to their spiritual advancement, the result is the same,—they are delivered, and find themselves more than compensated for that which they have undergone. Yes; “if not in our way, yet still in His own way,” the Lord will, in answer to our prayers, “deliver us from Evil.”

“*From our Ghostly Enemy.*” It has been generally agreed that, correctly translated, this Petition is not so much a Prayer for deliverance from impersonal Evil such as we have just been considering, as from the Evil One himself,—the Adversary who desires all mankind as his prey.† And the Revisers of the New Testament,—men of the greatest authority and the profoundest knowledge,—have now set their *imprimatur* upon this rendering, although they have placed the Text, as it stands, in the margin as an alternative, but less accurate, reading.

Now, if we may accept this version,—as, not-

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† 2 Pet. v. 8.

withstanding the strong statement of Stier,* that “our inmost sense of holy propriety recoils from it,” we believe we may,—this Petition thus forces upon our notice a doctrine which, especially of late years, has met with more denial, and ridicule, and scorn (and that not only from professed unbelievers), than perhaps any other dogma of our holy Religion, namely, the Personality of Satan.

We may admit at once that there is, in this doctrine much, very much, which (with our present knowledge) seems mysterious and even inexplicable. And, therefore, when it is urged—with apparently so much plausibility—that “Satan” *must* be merely an Essence, an Abstraction, an Influence, since it is impossible for us to believe that God could (consistently with what is revealed to us of His Attributes) permit to exist in His Universe a great Contriver and Artificer of Evil, who should walk the earth unseen, and seduce and deprave the children of God,—that such a permission (if given) would surely imply that “our Father” was either not Omnipotent, not All-Wise, or not All-Good,—we may reply that it is a part of our discipline, in this probation-time to find many things incomprehensible and unanswerable.

In the vast Ocean there are places, the depth of

* “*Words of the Lord Jesus :*” Vol. I, p. 243.

which no human being has succeeded in fathoming ; in the great Firmament there are tracts of space which, as yet, no eye has ever seen, no telescope ever made visible to the astronomer ;—shall we, then, be surprised if, in the region of the Divine, there are mysteries which, by even the greatest human Intelligence, are, as yet, incapable of comprehension ? Why, our own individual existences are mysterious enough to teach us this ; and, as has been well said, “ If it is difficult to reconcile the existence of the Devil with the Attributes of God, it is at least *equally* difficult to explain, what it is impossible to deny, namely, the existence in man of a bias towards Evil.” * There seems, certainly, no *a priori* argument which can be adduced against the doctrine of the Personality of Satan, which would not be at least equally operative against the existence of Evil itself.

Clear and distinct, at all events, is the Word of God upon the subject. Holy Scripture declares, in language of no doubtful meaning, that the sin and misery which we see around us has a Personal Author ; and however silent it may be as to his origin, one thing at least is plain,—he was not evil

* “ *A Sermon on the Personality of the Tempter,*” by Dr. C. J. Vaughan, published 1851, which contains a very exhaustive treatment of this subject.

at the time when God created him. *Then* all was “very good,” *then* all was pleasing in God’s sight, *then* all was pure. But at some later time he seems to have taken the lead in a rebellion against the Authority of God, and for this he lost “his first Estate.”

No doubt it may fairly be objected that it is strange that Evil should be able to reach him in God’s Heaven ; but, in answer to this, we can only again plead our ignorance ; and admit, if we deplore, our limited knowledge. The Origin of Evil, whether on earth or in Heaven, is a secret known only to God. But since we are compelled to admit that Evil does, as a matter of fact, *exist*, why should we refuse our assent to the doctrine which is surely not *more* difficult of conception, namely, that it has a Personal Head, who is both a Doer, and a Promoter, of iniquity ?

Let us just mention a few out of the many passages in God’s Word which support this doctrine.

Apart altogether from the record of the Fall,—which it is now the fashion to allegorize, and treat as a Divine philosopheme rather than a history of literal facts, but in which there is nothing really incredible,—there are many passages which are plain and unambiguous ; passages which, if we

treat them fairly, it is impossible to evade, or explain away; passages which compel us either to accept the doctrine of the Personality of a subtle Spirit of Evil as literally true, or else to reject every view of Inspiration, and to suppose that the Master and His Apostles were mistaken in the view which they so undoubtedly held, and, in their teaching, have handed down to us. We need scarcely point out that, if we were compelled to accept this latter conclusion, it would be inconsistent with a belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Constant and decisive are the statements of Holy Scripture with reference to this fallen Spirit. Over and over again are personal titles given to the Tempter, and acts ascribed to him which can only be assigned to a personal Agent. He is called “the Devil,”* “Satan,”† “the Prince of this world.”‡ He is said to be “transformed into an Angel of light;” § to him is imputed the provocation of David to number Israel;” || and he is described as holding a controversy with the Most High.¶ Again, how but in reference to a Personal Tempter, can we explain such passages as the following, which occur in connection with the Master’s Temptation,—“Then was Jesus led up of

* Heb. ii. 14. † Rom. xvi. 20. ‡ St. John xvi. 11.
§ 2 Cor. xi. 14. || 1 Chron. xxi. 1. ¶ Job i. 7, 12; ii. 2, 7.

the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil;" * "And the Tempter came and said unto Him," † etc.; "Then the Devil taketh Him into the holy city, and he set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him," ‡ etc.; "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan;" § "Then the Devil leaveth Him." ||

Can it be contended that all this language is figurative, and not literal? Try it for yourselves, brethren, by the substitution of the impersonal word "Evil" or "Sin" for the Names which occur in these passages, and I am sure that you will feel that the reading will be absolutely without sense.

Just so is it with the Apostles in their Epistles. They speak of Sin as the result of the suggestions and persuasions of Another; and refer to an organised spiritual Power of Evil. St. Paul alludes to the forgiveness of an offender by the Corinthian Church as being necessary "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan," and goes on to say "we are not ignorant of his devices." ¶ He exhorts the Ephesians to "put on the whole armour of God" in order that they may "be able

* St. Matt. iv. 1.

† St. Matt. iv. 3. *Revised Version.*

‡ St. Matt. iv. 5.

§ St. Matt. iv. 10.

|| St. Matt. iv. 11.

¶ 2 Cor. ii. 11. *Revised Version.*

to stand against the wiles of the Devil;” * and he states that the direct use of “the shield of Faith” is “to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One.” † St. Peter warns his readers that their “Adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;” ‡ and his question to Ananias § demanded the reason why “Satan” had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Ghost.

If, then, the existence and relentless activity of such a crafty Adversary be no mere fancy or theory, but a fact solemnly, terribly real,—if our danger be so great that every day and every hour we are in peril from his wiliness,—well may we, in earnest, heartfelt prayer, desire that our Father, of His mercy, will deliver us, will forcibly rescue || our corrupt nature from this Evil Spirit who is ever seeking to mar God’s purpose in Creation. True, we are called upon to “resist the Devil,” ¶ and to use our Christian armour to withstand his assaults; but the struggle will be an unequal one if we venture to undertake it in reliance upon our own strength. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that *He* might destroy the works of the Devil.” ** With His Help, Who is “the Stronger than the strong man armed,” †† we shall

* Eph. vi. 11. † Eph. vi. 16. *Revised Version.*

‡ 1 Pet. v. 8. § Acts v. 3. || *psalm.* ¶ St. James iv. 7.

** 1 St. John iii. 8. †† St. Luke xi. 22.

be conquerors; His Grace will prove sufficient for us in every trial and emergency; and, in His Strength, we shall be able to repel all the assaults of the Evil One.

Time will not permit of enlargement upon the third kind of “Evil,” which is called in our Catechism “*Everlasting Death*.” But whatever views we may hold as to the meaning of the word “Everlasting,” whatever distinctions we may draw between it and the word “Eternal,” whatever comfort we may derive from the knowledge of God’s boundless Love,—this much, at least, is certain, that spiritual “Death” is the inevitable consequence of Sin. In clear and distinct language does God declare that “the wages of Sin is Death;” * and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” † No; Sin unforgiven cannot go unpunished, and therefore we may well regard this Petition as including a prayer for deliverance from the terrible consequences of Evil. †

Brethren, there are three classes of persons who, when they use this and the preceding Petition, cannot do so in full sincerity,—who may indeed utter the words, but for whom they can have little reality of meaning. Two of these classes we

* Rom. vi. 23.

† Ezek. xviii. 4, 20.

‡ *Malum supplicii, or malum pœnæ.*

referred to last Sunday,—those who dally and trifle with Evil,—who again and again give Satan “an advantage” by voluntarily placing themselves in positions of Temptation, or by not exerting themselves to avoid occasions of Sin; and they who make themselves Satan’s agents by becoming tempters of others, and helping them to sin. But the third class, and the one which is, perhaps, the most difficult to deal with of all, consists of those persons who, when they ask for deliverance, expect all to be done *for* them, and do not themselves make use of the means which God has provided for strengthening them under Temptation, and for their deliverance from Evil.

What should we think of a soldier on foreign service who, day by day, neglected or refused to eat his rations; and then complained, when the time came to fight the enemy, that he was not strong enough for the encounter? Yet there are many soldiers in Christ’s Army who neglect, if they do not absolutely refuse, to partake of that Food which God has supplied, who seldom or never come to Holy Communion, who, like Naaman the Syrian, whose history we have heard read this morning, would perhaps do “some great thing,” but who count the reception of a little consecrated Bread and Wine too small, too trivial a matter for them

to attend to,—forgetting or disregarding the fact that it was the Divine Master’s own command, and that His orders can never be slighted without distinct loss to our spiritual lives.

Once more, this morning, the invitation to that Feast of Love is given; once more that Holy Table is made ready for us. Let us, then, now humbly and thankfully “draw near with faith;” and as in the course of that Service, we once more use this Petition for deliverance from the Evil One, let us also desire that God, Who has “put into our minds” this “good Desire” will also enable us to do our part to bring that, and *every* good desire, to full effect.

SUNDAY MORNING,
September 6th, 1885.

IX.

**“For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power,
and the Glory, for Ever. Amen.”**

ST. MATT. VI. 13.

THE words are the Ascription, or Doxology, to that complete and perfect Prayer to which, for more than a month, our attention has been invited; and, with their consideration, we bring these Sermons to a close.

The Prayer itself really ended with the words which we considered this morning; and many of you know that, in St. Luke's version, our Text is not contained. And not only this; but in so very many important Manuscripts of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is it wanting, that Dean Alford declares* that “on every ground of sound criticism it must be omitted;” and the Revisers of the New Testament have also struck out the words from the text itself,—although, in the margin, they have noted the fact that “many Authorities, some ancient, but with variations, add” them to the Prayer.

* *Greek Test.* Vol. I., *in loco*.

Notwithstanding this weighty authority, I confess that I am disinclined to believe the Text to be other than a genuine portion of the Lord's Prayer, as it came from the lips of our Divine Master. And, for the sake of those members of the congregation who, although they may not have much time or opportunity for research, yet know something of the materials on which Textual Criticism is based, we propose just to mention the most important evidence on both sides, in order that they may see the grounds on which we base our opinion that the evidence for the omission, great as it is, is nevertheless insufficient to warrant us in expunging this clause from the Prayer.

Now, on the one hand, it must be admitted that it is not found in many of the Manuscripts of the Old Latin; nor is it in the Vulgate translation of the Gospels. And,—it may be for this reason,—we do not find it commented upon by any of the Fathers of the first three centuries, and this, notwithstanding the fact that Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and Origen, have written what profess to be Expositions of this Prayer. Nor is it in the earliest printed Arabic Version, although it does find a place in the earliest Arabic Manuscripts. With respect to the Greek Uncial Manuscripts of

the New Testament, two* are defective in this sixth Chapter of St. Matthew, and therefore afford no evidence either way; while from three others, of great antiquity,† this clause is omitted.

There can be no question that a mass of evidence such as this, notwithstanding the fact that it is all negative, and not positive, is exceedingly weighty; and we cannot wonder that it has led a large number of Commentators to regard this clause as an interpolation from the liturgies of the Eastern Church,—more especially as we know that it was the custom to use Doxologies such as this in connection with their liturgical prayers.

Yet the External evidence on the other side, which is of a positive character, is not inconsiderable; while the argument in favour of the retention of the Ascription on Subjective grounds is also worthy of consideration. For, although the clause is omitted from the vast majority of the Latin Versions, it is found in three of the *oldest* of those manuscripts. It also holds a place in almost all the Greek Versions which are known in the present day, and which number more than seven hundred,—being excluded from less than a

* The *Codex Alexandrinus* (A), and the *Codex Ephræmi* (C).

† The *Codex Sinaiticus* (Σ), the *Codex Beza* (D), and the *Codex Vaticanus* (B).

dozen. It is also found in the "Apostolic Constitutions;"* and is commented upon, without anything to shew that they had the slightest suspicion that it was not genuine, by many of the Greek Fathers, amongst whom we may mention St. Chrysostom.

Again, the *Ancient Versions* of the New Testament,—it is said without a single exception,—contain the Text; and their evidence is of the utmost value, since even the oldest Greek Manuscripts which now exist seem of recent date when they are compared with the age of these. The Peschito Version, to which some ascribe a date not much later than Apostolic times, contains it; as do also the Ethiopic, the Armenian, and the Gothic: and it is the opinion of a Scholar of much research† that "since these various Versions were made from Greek Manuscripts, it is evident that in the *first* century of the Christian era, this Doxology was an integral part of the Gospel of St. Matthew; and inasmuch as these translations were made in various and remote parts of the East, it is clear that this clause was a part of the Lord's Prayer in the greater portion of ancient manuscripts, if not in all."

* *Lib.* III. c. 18.

† Rev. W. Denton, M.A., Author of "*A Commentary on the Gospels.*"

And, viewed Subjectively, and apart from the evidence of Manuscripts altogether, the balance of probabilities would surely lead us to conclude that it is far more likely that an omission of words really used should have occurred in some copies of the Gospel, than that an Appendix should have been added, without warrant, to the Lord's own words,—an Appendix too, presuming to set forth the reasons for the requests made in the Master's Prayer.

On these grounds then, I believe, notwithstanding the weighty evidence on the other side, that this Ascription is an integral and genuine portion of the Prayer bequeathed by the Master to His Church. Let us now consider the words as they stand. They are, as we have said, an Ascription or Doxology,—a short Hymn of Praise which teaches us three most useful lessons.

(1) They shew us how fitting it is that Praise should accompany our petitions to God's Throne of Grace. We are so apt to forget this, although so many of the Prayers which the Church invites us to use ought to teach us better. It is a common fault with many to omit both Praise and Thanksgiving from their private Worship. They ask God for benefits; but forget both to praise Him for what He is, and to give Him thanks for the many

mercies which He has bestowed upon them. This Ascription should correct this error; for it ought not only to remind us of the Source whence all our Blessings come, but should also teach us that Praise is the fitting accompaniment of Prayer.

(2) But this is not all. This Doxology is the warrant for the preceding Petitions, and sets forth the reasons upon which they are based. It is just *because* "the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory," all belong to God, that we may with confidence venture to approach Him with our prayers.

The *Kingdom* is God's. He is "the King of kings, and Lord of lords,"—"the Ruler and Governor" of all the world; and it is on this Confession of His Sovereignty that we ground the Petitions for the hastening of the time when that Kingdom shall have fully come, and His Will shall be universally obeyed.

His is the *Power*. Nothing is "too hard for the Lord."* Riches, and Honour, and all things come of Him; and it is on this Confession of His ability to grant our requests that we ground the Petitions for the necessities of our daily life, and for the forgiveness of our daily sins.

His is the *Glory*. And therefore we ask that

* Jer. xxxii. 27.

That Glory may be manifested in our protection from Temptation, that His Name may be glorified in our lives, and that we may be rescued from the power of the Evil One. "Not unto us, but unto His Name" shall be the praise of every holy deed or thought, of every temptation resisted, of every victory won.

And this "*For Ever*,"—"to all ages." The words remind us of our own *Gloria Patri*. We can never understand them in all their depth of meaning,—perhaps they are more for thought than for words. Earthly potentates shall wax old, earthly kingdoms crumble into dust, earthly protectors fail; but God's Kingdom, Power, and Glory, fail not and change not:—*this* we know. But to those who may be curious as to the possibilities of Eternal existence, we can perhaps give no better answer than the well-known one ascribed to a little child:—

"Great God, an infant cannot tell
What such a thing may be;
I only pray that I may dwell
That long, long time with Thee."

(3) Our last lesson from this clause shall be drawn from the amplification which we find in the Church Catechism. These are the words:—"And this I trust He will do of His Mercy and Goodness,

through our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore I say Amen,* so be it." Yes, complete and absolute trust in "our Father,"—that is, after all, the great lesson to which this Prayer brings us. If "the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory" belong to One Who loves us more dearly than any earthly Father loves his children, surely we can trust Him to do all that we have asked, if He shall see it to be right.

Brethren, to wish to be trusted is a natural wish. We know how it paralyses all our energy for work if we are led to feel that those who are set over us have not a complete confidence in us: you are aware how it would distress you to see that your own children could not trust you. Just so is it with "our Father which is in Heaven." He desires the confidence, the trust, of His children; and "without *faith* it is impossible to please Him,"†—without trust there can be no true

* "The word itself is originally Hebrew, but it is used by the Evangelists, and is received still in every language and by all people, without translation or alteration into the Greek, Latin, or any other tongue. The reason of our retaining it is that it might, from this and other circumstances, be evident that the older Church, the synagogue of the children of Israel, and the congregation of the Church of Christ, gathered out of all nations and languages, make up but one mystical Body, whereof Christ is the Head."—*Andrews*.

† Heb. xi. 6.

prayer. It is but mockery to approach Him with our petitions unless we not only have faith in His existence, but can join in the ascription to Him of the Power to grant our requests.

But even when we acknowledge this, our Catechism reminds us that there is one step more. We ourselves are so unworthy, so undeserving of God's favour, that our ground of trust must consist solely in the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. For although this is not definitely expressed at the end of this Prayer, it is in accordance, not only with our own knowledge of ourselves, but also with the Master's own teaching. He Himself commanded us to ask for Blessings in His Name; and it is for this reason that, in nearly every instance, the Prayers which our Church provides for our use close with the words "Through Jesus Christ, our Lord," or their equivalents. No; *we* have no title to consideration except His Meritoriousness; and if we ever think otherwise, we virtually mock God when we declare that His is the Glory. Thus, then, with our declaration of reiterated assent to the foregoing Petitions, the "Amen" closes and seals up the Saviour's Model Prayer.

But before we leave the consideration of it, let us, just for one moment, deal with an objection which has been brought, by some persons, against its

invariable use in each of our Services. It is alleged that, "by causing us to use it thus frequently, the Church encourages those 'vain repetitions'* which the Master condemned." Now, they who make this charge must surely have overlooked three things. First, that the word thus translated † strictly has the idea of "unmeaning" or "senseless declamation," and therefore cannot in any way be held to apply to the Petitions in the Lord's Prayer; next, that this Prayer is represented, by St. Matthew, to be a continuation of the very Sentence in which the word occurs; and thirdly, that, in the course of the Master's three hours' Agony in the garden of Gethsemane, we are told that He Himself prayed, over and over again, "*in the same words*," ‡—words possibly taken from this very Prayer.

Of course, in saying this, we do not intend to defend that combination of Services,—now fortunately much less common than it used to be,—by which the Order for Morning Prayer, the Litany, and the Communion Service, are all used at the same hour; and, by reason of which, the Lord's Prayer is repeated five times. All that we contend is that, in each service of whatever nature, the Lord's Prayer, with the very greatest propriety,

* St. Matt. vi. 7. † βαττολογῆσθε. ‡ St. Matt. xxvi. 44.

finds a place,—that man's poor words should always be supplemented, both in public and private devotion, by the words of All-Perfect Wisdom.

And now, brethren, this Course of Sermons on the Lord's Prayer is ended. As we look back upon the teaching of the past five weeks, I ask you, I ask myself, this one solemn question;—Has it made any difference in our lives? It is a truth which we too often forget or disregard, that a responsibility attaches to us for every Service which we attend, and for every Sermon which we hear.

Do we pray the Lord's Prayer more intelligently now than we did six weeks ago? Has it, for us, a greater depth of meaning than it had *then*? When we kneel down, and invoke *our Father* to hear our Petitions, do we realize more fully that we are coming into the Presence of a Loving, Listening Auditor Who is ready, because we are His children, to give us those things which He sees to be for our highest good? When we say *Hallowed be Thy Name*, is it a sincere Prayer, accompanied by an earnest resolution to endeavour, in all our actions and words, to treat that Name, and all that concerns it, as Holy? When we pray *Thy Kingdom come*, and *Thy Will be done*, do we really desire that for which we pray, and endeavour (so far as we are able) to hasten the time when

these Petitions shall be accomplished? When we ask God for *Daily Bread*, do we realize the fact that

" *All good gifts around us
Are sent from God above,*"

and do we receive the Blessings which He sends us thankfully, and with gratitude? When we beseech Him to *forgive us our Trespases*, do we, from the bottom of our hearts, forgive those who may have offended us, and seek to be reconciled with any with whom we may be at variance? And, when we implore that we may be *kept from Temptation*, and *delivered from Evil*, do we watch as well as pray?

If not, then this Course of Sermons will have fallen short of the end which it was designed to accomplish; but, in whatever degree it may be otherwise,—in whatever measure it may have aided any to prize more dearly, to repeat more devoutly, to use with more reality, this precious Form of Words,—for *that* we can only sincerely thank Him who has so blessed it. Certainly, for my own part, I can hardly tell you how much help my preparation of these Sermons has given to me personally; and I sincerely pray that the Master, of His Infinite Mercy, may grant that our consideration of this Prayer may be found, at the

last great Day, to have borne some fruit to His Honour and Glory. At that Day may He vouchsafe that we may all meet (not one being absent) in the Home which shall be the Eternal Inheritance of those who can truly and sincerely call God their “Father.”

SUNDAY EVENING,

September 6th, 1885.



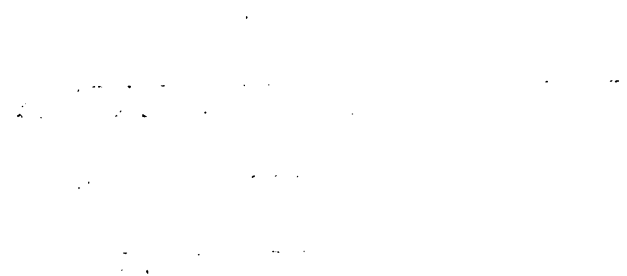
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